

**REMARKS**

Claims 1 and 3-28 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claims 1 and 14 are amended. Support for the amendments to claims 1 and 15 can be found at least in Figs. 4 and 5 and the corresponding disclosure in the specification. No new matter is added.

Applicants appreciate the courtesies shown to Applicants' representative by Examiner Wilhelm in the August 5, 2009 personal interview. The reasons presented at the interview as warranting favorable action are incorporated into the remarks below, which constitute Applicants' record of the interview.

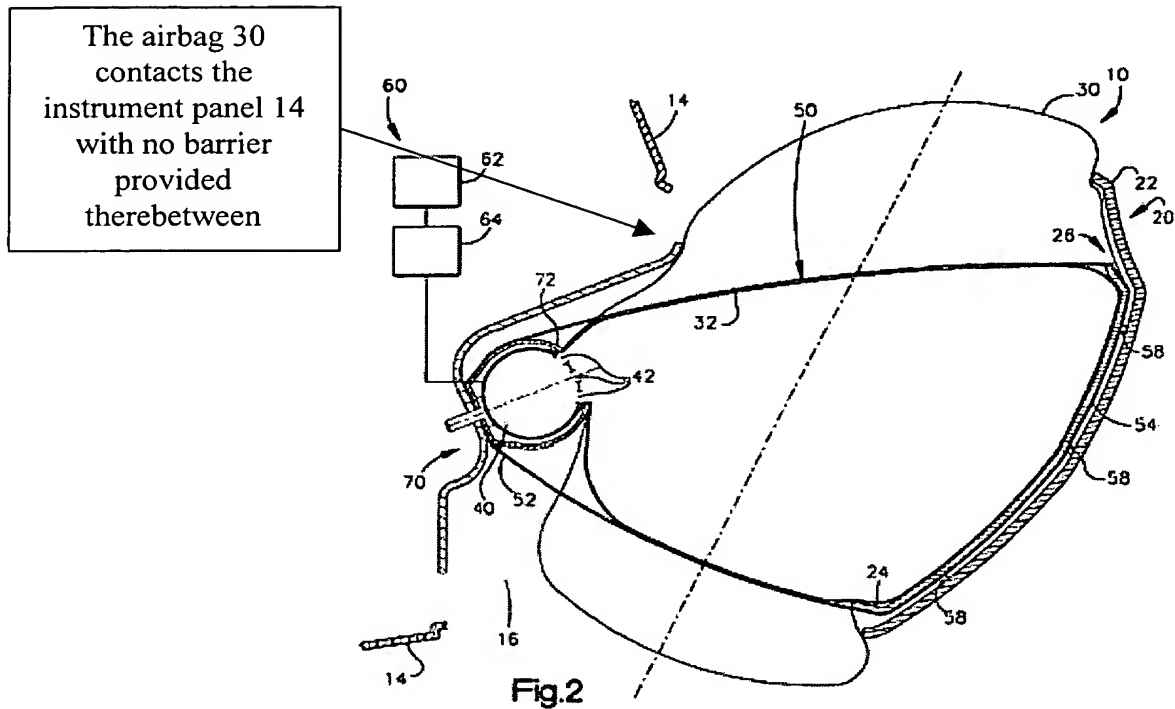
Applicants appreciate the Office Action's indication that claims 3, 6-8, 10, 16, 19, 20 and 24-27 recite allowable subject matter.

Claims 1, 4, 7-9, 11, 15, 17, 18, 21-23 and 28 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) over Feldman (U.S. Patent No. 6,435,554). The rejection is respectfully traversed.

Feldman does not teach the features of independent claims 1 and 15. Feldman does not teach "a non-inflatable airbag support that is ... structured to expand upon deployment of the airbag so as to provide a barrier between the instrument panel and the airbag," as recited in independent claims 1 and 15 (emphasis added).

The Office Action asserts that the load distribution plate member 24 or tether 50 of Feldman corresponds to the claimed airbag support; that the instrument panel 14 of Feldman corresponds to the claimed instrument panel; and that the airbag 30 of Feldman corresponds to the claimed airbag of independent claims 1 and 15 (see Office Action, page 2). However, as illustrated in Fig. 2 of Feldman, neither the plate member 24 nor the tether 50 provide any barrier between the airbag 30 and the instrument panel 14. Rather, the plate member 24 merely distributes a load to the passenger portion of the airbag 30, and the tether 50 supports the plate member 24 during load distribution (see Figs. 2 and 3 of Feldman). As shown in

Fig. 2 of Feldman (annotated below), a barrier is not provided between the airbag 30 and any feature of Feldman that could reasonably correspond to an instrument panel.



Therefore, Feldman does not teach (from p. 7) as recited in independent claims 1 and 15 (emphasis added).

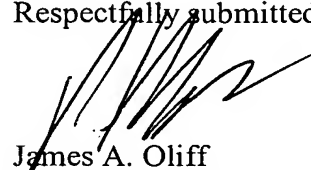
Claims 4, 7-9, 11, 17, 18, 21-23 and 28 variously depend from independent claims 1 and 15. Therefore, these claims are allowable for at least their dependency on independent claims 1 and 15, as well as for the additional features they recite.

Applicants thus respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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